

# Coronal Mass Ejections: Masses, Dynamics and Shock Kinematics

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## Summary

Coronal mass ejections (CMEs) are large-scale eruptions of magnetized plasma from the low solar atmosphere into interplanetary space. With energies of up to  $10^{26}$  J, they are the most energetic eruptive phenomena in the solar system and are also the driver of plasma shocks from the corona into the heliosphere. Despite many years of study, the nature of the forces governing their eruption, and the kinematical behavior of the resulting shock, remain poorly understood. This thesis will presents the first accurate calculation of the magnitude of the total force on a CME. I will also show a previously unseen plasma shock behavior that sheds new light into the kinematical nature of CME-driven shocks in the corona.

In the past, measurement of the forces governing the propagation of CMEs have been hindered by highly uncertain estimates of the total mass of the ejection. The primary source of uncertainty is the unknown position and geometry of the CME, leading to an erroneous treatment of the Thomson scattering equations which are used to estimate the mass. Geometrical uncertainty on the CMEs position and size has primarily been due to observations of the eruption from a single vantage point. However, with the launch of the STEREO spacecraft, the two viewpoints can be exploited to derive the CMEs position and size, ultimately resulting in mass uncertainty that is both reliably quantified and much reduced. These much better estimates for the mass can then be combined with kinematical results that are also more reliable and hence lead to the first reliable quantification of the total force acting on the CME.

This thesis will present the method by which mass values derived from the STEREO coronagraphs, and the uncertainties reliably quantified. Combining this with a previous kinematical analysis, the mechanical energies and total force on the CME is derived. Using the magnetohydrodynamical equation of motion, the relative sizes of the forces at each stage in the CME propagation are estimated, revealing the Lorentz force is the largest source of CME acceleration early in its propagation. This analysis also leads to a reliable observational estimate of size of this Lorentz force.

CMEs often erupt at speeds in excess of the local MHD wave speeds in the corona. Traveling in excess of Mach 1, they often drive shocks which can have a variety of manifestations, from radio bursts to the propagation of bright pulse seen in extreme ultraviolet (EUV) images. Despite these myriad shock phenomena being observed for decades, the relationship between them remains unknown. Chapters X and Y of this thesis, will describe the construction of instrumentation to observe high time sampling spectroscopy of these radio bursts. These observations are combined with high cadence radio and EUV images to reveal the presence of a shock driven by the expansion of the CME flank that resulted in both the EUV pulse and radio burst. Furthermore, the radio spectra evidence for particle acceleration at this shock is presented, revealing the shock was capable of producing a bursty acceleration of near-relativistic electrons. This previously unseen behavior sheds new light on the physics governing radio burst generation and the relationship to CMEs and EUV pulses.

*For my parents.*

# Acknowledgements

Some sincere acknowledgements...

# List of Publications

1. **Carley, E. P.**, MacAteer, R. T. J., & Gallagher, P. T.  
“Coronal Mass Ejection Masses, Energies, and Force Estimates Using *STEREO*”,  
*The Astrophysical Journal*, Volume 752, Issue 1, article id. 36, 8 pp. (2012).
2. Zucca, P., **Carley, E. P.**, McCauley, J., Gallagher, P. T. ,Monstein, C., &  
MacAteer, R. T. J.,  
“Observations of Low Frequency Solar Radio Bursts from the Rosse Solar-  
Terrestrial Observatory”,  
*Solar Physics*, Volume 280, Issue 2, pp.591-602. (2012).
3. **Carley, E. P.**, Long, D. M., & Gallagher, P. T.  
“Shock Acceleration of Energetic Particles in the Solar Atmosphere”,  
*Some Journal*, Volume X, Issue Y, article id. (2013)
4. Zucca, P., **Carley, E. P.**, Bloomfield, S. D., & Gallagher, P. T.  
“Density and Alfvén....”,  
*Some Journal*, Volume X, Issue Y, article id. (2013)
5. Bloomfield, S. D., **Carley, E. P.**,  
“A Comprehensive Overview of the 2011 June 7 Solar Storm”,  
*Astronomy & Astrophysics*, Volume X, Issue Y, article id. (2013)



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# 1

## Introduction

The Sun has long been the focus of humanity's curiosity. Throughout history it has been the harbinger of new religions, philosophies, and sciences. It has changed our understanding of our place in the Universe and allowed us to push forward the frontiers of stellar astronomy. Although our understanding of the Sun is nowadays more advanced, the curiosity we hold for it has not changed since the very early humans. Now, we understand the Sun is a star similar to any other in its class, currently going through a relatively unchanging 11 year cycle of activity that is extremely rich in physical complexity. The study of such complex phenomena has yielded immeasurable advances in many areas of physics such as spectroscopy, plasma physics, magnetohydrodynamics (MHD), particle physics, to name but a few. Although some of these sciences have grown over decades (or even centuries) they are still incomplete. I hope this theses, in some small way, will contribute to the continuing growth of these sciences and to the understanding of our nearest star.

## 1.1 The Sun

The Sun is our nearest star, located  $1.49 \times 10^6$  km from Earth at the centre of our solar system. It is main sequence star of spectral class G2V, with a luminosity of  $L_{\odot} = (3.84 \pm 0.04) \times 10^{26}$  W, mass of  $M_{\odot} = 1.989 \times 10^{30}$  kg and radius of  $R_{\odot} = 6.985 \times 10^8$  m. It was born approximately  $4.6 \times 10^9$  years ago when a giant molecular cloud underwent gravitational collapse and began hydrogen nuclear fusion at its centre (reference). The energy produced from this fusion resulted in enough pressure to counteract gravity and bring about a hydrostatic equilibrium ( $\nabla P = -\rho g$ ) allowing the young star to reach a stability that is sustained today. It is estimated the Sun will maintain this stability for another 5 billion years, at which point, it will move off the main sequence and into the red giant phase. During this later part of its life, it will grow in size to 100 times its current radius and begin nuclear burning of heavier elements such as carbon and oxygen. Once carbon burning in the core is depleted it can no longer sustain nuclear fusion of heavier elements, resulting in a gravitational instability that will eventually lead to a stellar nova. This nova will result in the loss of the outer envelopes and ultimately the Sun's death, leaving behind a compact, dense white-dwarf.

Until such time, the Sun will remain on the main sequence in a regular state of hydrogen fusion in its core. The energy released during this process is the ultimate source of light and all energetic activity that we observe from Earth and beyond. Before we can understand how this energy manifests in the solar atmosphere as a variety of energetic phenomena, it is important to understand how the energy is generated inside the star and how it is transported through its interior.

### 1.1.1 Solar Interior

The source of the Sun's energy is nuclear fusion in the solar core. Temperatures as high as  $15 \times 10^6$  K allow four protons to fuse and become a helium nucleus i.e.,  $4 {}^1\text{H} \rightarrow {}^4\text{He} + 2e^+ + 2\nu + 2\gamma$ , in a process known as the proton-proton or pp-chain. Here  $e^+$ ,  $\nu$ , and  $\gamma$  are a positron, neutrino, and gamma ray photon, respectively, resulting from fusion processes in the pp-chain. The solar core extends to approximately  $0.25 R_{\odot}$  from solar center where hydrogen burning (fusion) stops. Beyond

## 1.2 Coronal Mass Ejections and Coronal Shocks

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this point, energy transport is dominated by photons scattering off of free particles. The transport of energy via radiation continues up to  $\sim 0.8 R_{\odot}$ , at which point the temperature is low enough such that neutral atoms form and radiation can no longer propagate freely due to the high opacity. Between  $\sim 0.8 - 1 R_{\odot}$  the temperature gradient is large enough for convection to become the dominant mechanism for the transport of energy to the solar surface

### 1.1.2 Solar Dynamo and Magnetic Field

### 1.1.3 Solar Atmosphere

### 1.1.4 Solar Wind

## 1.2 Coronal Mass Ejections and Coronal Shocks

### 1.2.1 Observations

### 1.2.2 Current understanding

### 1.2.3 Open Questions

# 2

## Magnetohydrodynamic and Plasma Kinetic Theory

### 2.1 Magnetohydrodynamics

#### 2.1.1 Magnetic Reconnection

#### 2.1.2 Coronal Mass Ejections

#### 2.1.3 Coronal Shocks

### 2.2 Plasma Kinetics

#### 2.2.1 Boltzmann Equation

#### 2.2.2 Shock Particle Acceleration

#### 2.2.3 Wave-Particle Interaction

#### 2.2.4 Electromagnetic Radiation in Plasma Shocks





## A Nice Appendix

This is where the appendix would go...

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